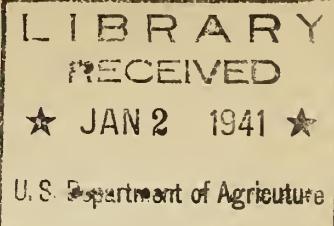


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When a Woman Buys a New Dress

A conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, November 19, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the Blue Network of the National Broadcasting Company.

--ooOoo--

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington. And it's Tuesday. According to our good old Tuesday custom, Ruth Van Deman's here --- with news from the Bureau of Home Economics. But evidently not news about food today --- at least I don't see any roast turkeys, or pumpkin pies standing around.

By the way, Ruth, how's the supply of that "Poultry Cooking" leaflet holding out --- the blue-and-white leaflet with the directions for cooking the Thanksgiving bird?

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

All right, I think. The girls in our mail room are running a neck-and-neck race to see who can handle the most requests in the shortest time.

KADDERLY:

Fighting their way through a regular avalanche of cards and letters -----

VAN DEMAN:

Just about. And before they get all the way up for aid, we're going to start another avalanche sliding in their direction.

At least I predict that just about every woman who hears about this new bulletin of Clarice Scott's will want to read it.

KADDERLY:

A new bulletin by Miss Scott. Am I safe in predicting that has something to do with clothes?

VAN DEMAN:

Perfectly safe, Wallace. This is about women's clothes. "Woman's Dresses and Slips - A Buying Guide," it's called. And here's your announcement copy.

KADDERLY:

Thanks. --- It seems to me this bulletin itself is wearing a very smart-looking "dress." The design of this cover is certainly very stylish. And the color scheme--- gray and white --- right up-to-the-minute.

VAN DEMAN:

Absolutely. Gray is one of the best colors this winter. But we really weren't following the fashion color card when we designed this cover.

Miss Scott's idea in writing this bulletin was to get down, black on white, the most important points a woman needs to think about when she goes to the store

to buy a new dress. The points that help her to choose a dress that "does something for her," and at the same time gives her her money's worth in wear.

KADDERLY:

I suppose it isn't as easy for a woman to choose her clothes as it is for a man. Women's clothes come in so many kinds of styles --- plain and fancy.

VAN DEMAN:

You wonder we come out with as sensible things as we do. Is that the idea lurking in the back of your mind?

KADDERLY:

Maybe --- I hadn't quite put it into those words.

VAN DEMAN:

We wouldn't hold it against you if you had, Wallace. There's no explaining some styles in women's clothes.

KADDERLY:

Hats, particularly?

VAN DEMAN:

Hats, peculiarly, I thought you were going to say. --- But finding the perfect dress for the amount of money that most of us can afford to spend, is no simple matter either. There are something over 170 million dresses for women turned out of our factories every year --- all varieties, as you say, some plain, some fancy.

KADDERLY:

And now that the fabrics are made out of so many kinds of fibers --- natural and synthetic --- that must complicate things too.

VAN DEMAN:

It does --- very decidedly. Now and then you can find a dress labeled for what it is --- cotton, rayon, wool, silk. But those labels are rather few and far between.

KADDERLY:

There'll be more and more of them though. For instance, the wool-labeling act recently passed by Congress is in that direction.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, definitely. And so are the trade regulations about labeling cotton goods preshrunk. The word preshrunk can't be used on a fabric likely to shrink unless the label carries a statement "will not shrink more than 1 or 2 per cent," or whatever the percentage is.

Yes, over and over again Miss Scott urges --- Read the Label on a dress. And if you don't know what the words on the label mean, don't be afraid to ask. Textile manufacture is marching right along and bringing new words with it all the time.

KADDERLY:

Ruth, I've been turning the pages of this bulletin as we've been talking, and I want to congratulate whoever made the drawings --- especially these sketches on

size and fit, here on page 10 and page 11.

VAN DEMAN:

Our staff artist made all the drawings. I know she'll be glad you approve. That particular series on size and fit do show very plainly how important it is when buying a dress to try it out --- sitting, walking, reaching. And if a woman drives a car, her dress needs to have plenty of "give" through the shoulders. Otherwise it will burst out at the armholes and split down the back.

KADDERLY:

That certainly happens to a man's shirt, when it's too snug.

VAN DEMAN:

There's no doubt about it, clothes you work in, and do a lot of exercising in need to give plenty of room for action.

KADDERLY:

And they need to follow the general lines of the body --- not be too loose and baggy so they slip around and catch you in the wrong places.

VAN DEMAN:

Sometimes that goes back to the design of a garment and the way it's cut. Turn to the next page of Miss Scott's bulletin there, and you'll see some clever drawings to illustrate good and poor cut.

KADDERLY:

Very tricky. Doesn't a dress cut on the straight of the goods --- I mean straight with the grain of the goods --- wear better? ---

VAN DEMAN:

Than one running all skewee --- I should say so. That's one of the things to watch out for in bargain clothes.

To save on yardage, the pattern pieces sometimes are not laid true with the grain of the goods, and they're skimped in the cutting. They don't have a generous allowance for seams.

KADDERLY:

Then the stitching must hang almost on the ragged edge.

VAN DEMAN:

The ravelly, ragged edge is right. Some of our very popular dress materials ravel very easily. They need generous seam allowance and some kind of binding or finish that keeps them from fraying --- particularly around the armholes --- and on all curved seams in fact.

KADDERLY:

Safety first on the curves --- well, that seems to be pretty good working philosophy everywhere.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, one way to tell whether a dress is a "safe" buy --- that is whether it's a good investment for hard wear, is to look at the inside seams and finishes.

Sometimes there are dresses hanging on the rack in the store that look very well at first glance. They have pretty buttons and belts. They're pressed to look smooth and smart. The fabric itself may be good. But when you examine the workmanship, it just doesn't measure up. It isn't good enough to hold up under steady wear. Some dresses are like that, but plenty more are not.

Over on the very next rack, there may be dresses in the same price range, or maybe just a dollar or two higher, that are well cut and well made --- excellent buys for the money.

KADDERLY:

Yes, with all those 170 million dresses that you say are made in a year in this country --- with mass production like that, there's bound to be a wide spread in quality as well as in style --- color, --- all the obvious things about a dress.

VAN DEMAN:

There's an old saying about a "Queen Anne front and a Mary Ann back." I don't know whether it was said first about clothes, or furniture, or houses, or what. Anyway, I find it a pretty good line to carry along on a shopping trip, no matter that I'm shopping for. It helps me to see all around a purchase.

KADDERLY:

That's right --- makes you look at it forwards and backwards and sideways.

Well, I expect that's the way lots of women will read this new bulletin of Miss Scott's --- from cover to cover and starting in the middle and going both ways.

VAN DEMAN:

That's what it's for. It's a very informal kind of a handbook for the woman who wants to buy satisfaction with her clothes. And it's grand for girls to use in home economics classes in school.

KADDERLY:

Well, Farm and Home friends, those of you who are interested in this new buying guide on women's dresses, just drop a card to the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. -----

Does this bulleting have a number, Ruth?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, but it isn't needed. Just say new dress-bulletin.

KADDERLY:

That might be said in two ways, Ruth --- a new bulletin about dresses; or, a bulletin about new dresses.

VAN DEMAN:

Either way, the bill for the new dress will come at the end of the month.

KADDERLY:

(Repeat offer of bulletin).